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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

27 April 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director, Office of Operations

SUBJECT : Evaluation of FBIS Saigon Operation

REFERENCE : Memo from Acting Assistant Director, Operations
dated 28 March 1956, same subject

1. The Office of Current Intelligence would view the closing of the FBIS operation in Saigon or its drastic curtailment as a very serious loss in terms of reporting on Indochina. While we have no way of assessing the value of the operation in financial terms, we can say that the daily FBIS contributions on North Vietnam are of such value that their loss would seriously affect, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the production of current intelligence on this strategically placed Communist country. In addition, the Saigon Bureau constitutes a unique intelligence asset on which this office has depended for the preparation of an important part of its reporting on South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

2. In a recent check of items of current intelligence produced on North Vietnam during a typical two-months' period, it was found that well over one-third were based entirely or in part upon information furnished by FBIS Saigon. Moreover, daily FBIS reports provide the Viet Minh analyst with invaluable collateral and background information which is not used directly in current intelligence production. Information of the kind furnished by the FBIS has been especially valuable since the closing of the American Consulate in Hanoi, which was previously a useful supplier of unclassified information. Other sources of information on North Vietnam are both more fragmentary and less current than FBIS contributions.

3. The North Vietnam desk has a particular need for the following types of information furnished by the FBIS listed in the approximate order of their importance:

a. Hanoi broadcasts in French, Vietnamese, Chinese, English, and Laotian.

b. Press scrutiny of the three principal Communist newspapers from Hanoi.

c. Communist press transmissions from Hanoi and the Viet Minh mission in Peking.

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d. The propaganda analysis contributed to the Department of State WEEKA cable.

e. Hanoi broadcasts to South Vietnamese hill tribes.

4. The closing of the Saigon office would result in the loss of an essential source of intelligence if, as suggested by the Assistant Director of OO, Viet Minh domestic programs in the future are to be broadcast only on local frequencies so that they could not be monitored in Okinawa.

5. Concerning the non-Communist areas of Indochina (South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), the rapid dissemination of information monitored by the Saigon Bureau often provides the earliest basis for reporting on important issues. In many of these instances, similar information received subsequently through other channels is of considerably reduced value to this office. Less obvious, but of equal importance to our operations, is the background information provided daily by the Saigon Bureau's broad coverage of multi-language broadcasts in the Indochinese area.

6. Of special interest to our Southeast Asia Branch is the Saigon Bureau's daily press survey, which furnishes, on a current basis, important details as well as interesting sidelights and local color on political, economic, and sociological events and trends in the Indochina area.

[Redacted Signature]

Acting Assistant Director
Current Intelligence

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